

Giant cable companies should not be permitted to grow larger. Further consolidation in the cable industry is a clear violation of horizontal ownership rules that must be re-established to serve the public interest.

The concentration of power and control over distribution of media is a growing problem in this country. Though we have more channels available than ever before, they are under the operation of a handful of giant corporations.

If Comcast and Time Warner are allowed to merge with Adelphia, the two companies will control nearly 50 percent of the national market. This level of concentration in the cable industry will lead to higher consumer rates and

lower quality
service.

Since passage of the
Telecommunications
Act of 1996 and the
\"deregulation\" of
cable, consumers
have seen their
rates jump an
average of 59
percent -- with some
areas experiencing
even more dramatic
increases.

We are required to
buy channels we
don't want or need
because the cable
operators bundle
them together. The
quality of customer
service often
reflects the fact
that cable
television is not a
competitive market.

Meanwhile, the cost
of cable modem
service remains out
of reach for many
households, holding
constant for years
and selectively
underserving rural
and low-income
Americans. The

American people are watching the digital divide widen even as the need for access to high-speed networks increases.

Cable companies have become less responsive to the needs and requirements of communities. The quality of public accountability in local franchise agreements has declined, as big companies leverage their power to squeeze local governments.

In many communities, the truly independent sources of local news, information and culture come from the public channels produced at the local access centers.

Unfortunately, local channels lack the resources to produce the programming that citizens want and need.

The last thing we need is to reward the anti-competitive actions of cable giants by permitting greater consolidation in ownership, reducing competition, and encouraging more of the same.

Please encourage small businesses and innovative start-up companies, in the traditions of this country, by refusing to let large corporations gain even more control of cable access. To allow this merger is to encourage a course toward monopolies, which have never been good for healthy commerce. This is especially true in a media service which has become increasingly necessary for informed and communicating households. In my geographical area,

the cable company
which serves a
neighboring town as
well as my own
already has a
10-year track record
of incredible
shoddiness in
holding up its end
of the contracted
agreements it made
with a local
community.

If large companies
have a strangle-hold
on access, it leaves
towns with little
negotiating
leverage, and at the
mercy of
mega-corporations in
terms of price,
coverage, and the
additional services
they contract to
provide to a
community in
exchange for the
right to operate
there.

Because of Comcast,
I can write to you
via the internet.
Because of Comcast
and its long
tentacles, it is
also my only option

for cable access; in that regard, I am already at its mercy and pay a higher than necessary price - literally.

Please exercise your power to keep the media market open for competition which leads to better service, lower prices, and a healthy variety in the market place. Citizens such as myself count on you -- and fund you through our taxes -- to ensure a modicum of regulation even within "deregulation," and to ensure compliance with the laws regarding media, including cable access.

Please be vigilant and intelligent about this, prohibiting the transfer of Adelphia Licenses to Comcast and Time Warner. Thank you.